



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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**DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**AUGUSTUS COSTA**

**W39476**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** June 6, 2017

**DATE OF DECISION:** May 29, 2018

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Paul M. Treseler, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sheila Dupre, Tina Hurley, Lucy Soto-Abbe

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole. Parole is denied with a review scheduled in five years from the date of the hearing.

**I. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

On January 26, 1983, in Worcester Superior Court, Augustus Costa was convicted of second degree murder in the death of Norma Wood Bazigian and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

On the evening of June 10, 1982, Mr. Costa was at a bar with his live-in girlfriend. While there, he noticed 36-year-old Norma Wood Bazigian, who was the mother of three children. Mr. Costa left the bar with his girlfriend, but later returned with the intention of making sexual advances toward Ms. Bazigian. After luring Ms. Bazigian outside of the establishment to smoke, he attempted to engage in sexual relations with her. When Ms. Bazigian rejected his advances, he held her down and forcefully raped her. Ms. Bazigian fought back and continued to scream. Mr. Costa threatened that if she did not stop screaming, he would kill her. As a result of her continued protest and screaming, Mr. Costa beat and kicked her to death with his boots. Her body was discovered by two men the following morning. She

was found naked, spread across a platform. Her body was badly beaten with burn marks to her face and singed hair.

Mr. Costa reported that after he raped and beat Ms. Bazigian, he returned to where he left the body approximately a half hour later. He stated that he was unsure what condition she was in, so he used his lighter to see her. He claimed that in doing so, he accidentally lit her hair on fire. Although he admitted that he was sure she was dead, he (again) left her body in the alley. During the course of the investigation, Mr. Costa gave numerous false versions of the offense.

This crime was committed while Mr. Costa was on parole in Massachusetts for rape, having been paroled in 1981. Mr. Costa appealed his second degree murder conviction, but judgment of the lower court was affirmed.

## **II. PAROLE HEARING ON JUNE 6, 2017**

Augustus Costa, now 63-years-old, appeared before the Parole Board for his review hearing on June 6, 2017. He was not represented by counsel. He was denied parole after his initial hearing in 1997, as well as after review hearings in 2002, 2007, and 2012. In his opening statement to the Board, Mr. Costa described how his distorted views of women, and his addiction to alcohol and drugs, played an integral part of his criminal thinking and the violent offenses he committed.

In discussing the governing offense, Mr. Costa did not dispute the facts of the case. He acknowledges that he regularly targeted women whom he perceived as weak/vulnerable. He often persuaded women to over-indulge in their consumption of alcohol and drugs (in order to lower their inhibitions) for the sole purpose of engaging in sexual relations. He became angry if a woman rejected his sexual advances, which escalated the level of violence perpetrated against them. He admits that he victimized upwards of 30 women, for which he has not been held accountable. Mr. Costa does not believe he is at risk to re-offend, as long as he maintains his sobriety. When asked by the Board, however, Mr. Costa acknowledged that if he were to drink again, he could possibly rape again. It should be noted that although Mr. Costa completed the major components of the Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) in 2009, the Treatment Review Panel concluded, "While he has completed the major components, there remain concerns regarding his anger, his full understanding of how his anger turned sexual and any connection with fire. It is imperative that Mr. Costa remain vigilant in his treatment."

The Board discussed Mr. Costa's institutional adjustment since his last hearing. Mr. Costa is currently incarcerated at North Central Correctional Institution; he was transferred there in 2010, after his successful completion of the SOTP. He is currently employed in the kitchen and regularly attends AA, NA, and Big Book. In 2014, Mr. Costa voluntarily withdrew from the Sex Offender Maintenance Program; he has since re-engaged in the program.

Mr. Costa's sister was present during the hearing. The Board considered testimony from the victim's former husband, who expressed strong opposition to parole. Worcester County Assistant District Attorney Michelle King spoke in strong opposition to parole.



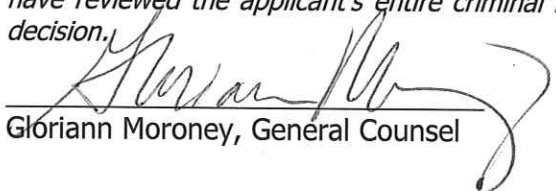
### III. DECISION

The Board is of the opinion that Augustus Costa has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. Mr. Costa is responsible for multiple sex offenses, and his presentment lacks insight. Mr. Costa should re-engage in SOTP, and he agreed to re-apply. Mr. Costa stated that there are approximately 30 rapes he is responsible for in the community.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Mr. Costa's institutional behavior, as well as his participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of his incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Mr. Costa's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Mr. Costa's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Augustus Costa is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Mr. Costa's next appearance before the Board will take place in five years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Mr. Costa to continue working toward his full rehabilitation.

*I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.*

  
Gloriann Moroney, General Counsel

5/29/18  
Date